

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) today announced that the Benedict Center in Milwaukee will be receiving \$100,000 to reactivate the Sisters Project, an intervention program designed to reach and help rehabilitate young women who are engaged in street prostitution and illegal drugs before they are arrested and have to enter the criminal justice system. Moore secured this funding in the fiscal year 2009 Commerce, Science, Justice Appropriations bill. The center targets women who are 17 years and older and who are actively engaged in prostitution and drug use in high-risk areas of Milwaukee.

“A life of prostitution and drug use is not something that girls aspire to – it’s scary, degrading and incredibly dangerous, and it’s very difficult to stop the cycle,” Congresswoman Moore said. “Services like the ones that will be provided at the Benedict Center through this grant are critical to stopping that cycle – empowering women to make different choices, and pulling them from the throes of a deeply troubling existence before law enforcement has to.”

The project’s goal is to offer a trauma-based recovery program for women and involve successful participants in peer support through mentoring. In addition, the program will encourage women on the street to voluntarily participate in the services that are available, and engage the community in supporting and helping women who leave a life of drugs and prostitution by providing them with community education opportunities. The program will be managed by a part-time therapist/counselor and a part-time Trinity Fellow. The Trinity Fellows Program is a graduate fellowship program at Marquette University dedicated to developing urban leaders with a commitment to social and economic justice.

The outreach staff will work together to approach women in high-risk areas identified by the police and community prosecutor. They will offer hygiene products, referrals and information on opportunities for a safe exit from the streets. They will also offer an invitation to the neighborhood Benedict Center drop-in sites. There will also be six Mentor Sisters who have been in conflict with the law before, but who have excelled at the Benedict Center, stabilized their lives, and now want to help other women succeed.

“Hundreds of women will now have real peer support to get off dangerous streets and leave degrading, desperate lives of prostitution and drugs behind because Representative Gwen Moore understands for these women life on the streets is not a choice freely made nor easily escaped,” said Kit Murphy McNally, Executive Director of the Benedict Center. “The \$100,000 Congressional Award that Rep. Moore brought home to Milwaukee will enable the Benedict Center to reactivate the Sisters Project, street outreach to women working the streets by women

who were once there themselves, but who achieved incredible transformations in their own lives through the opportunities they immersed themselves in at the Benedict Center in the past.”

“Rep. Moore’s advocacy impacts the safety and well being of our entire community. All of us involved with the Benedict Center are extremely grateful for her vision and tireless work for the rights of women and the greater good of all.”

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